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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIJING 003538

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/11/2028

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SUBJECT: PRC/IRAN: AHMADINEJAD VISITS BEIJING, ASKS PRC TO
PASS IRANIAN VIEWS TO REST OF P5-PLUS-1

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Aubrey Carlson.
Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In a September 6-7 visit to Beijing, Iranian President Mahmud Ahmadinejad thanked President Hu Jintao for China's "constructive role" in negotiations over Iran's nuclear program and expressed hope the Chinese would "pass Iran's views" to the other P5-plus-1 countries. The MFA sought to downplay the importance of the visit, stressing that President Hu met with Ahmadinejad for "protocol reasons" during the Iranian President's visit to the Beijing Paralympic Games. Hu and Ahmadinejad stressed the good relations between the two countries, with Hu expressing China's willingness to deepen cooperation on energy, according to our MFA source. President Hu urged the Iranians to show flexibility in dealing with the nuclear issue, and Ahmadinejad said the Iranians seek "common ground" on the two proposals on the nuclear program that the Iranians view as still on the table for negotiation. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Xu Wei, Deputy Director of the MFA West Asian and North African Affairs Department's Iran and Turkey Division, briefed PolOff September 10 on Iranian President Mahmud Ahmadinejad's September 6-7 visit to Beijing to attend the Opening Ceremony of the Beijing Paralympic Games.

MFA Plays Down the Visit

¶3. (C) Xu downplayed the importance of Ahmadinejad's visit, stressing that the Iranian leader traveled to China at the invitation of his country's National Olympic Committee, and that the Beijing Paralympic Committee handled the logistics of his trip. (Note: This is technically the case for all Heads of State attending the Olympics and Paralympics.) President Hu held a bilateral meeting with Ahmadinejad during his stay, but Xu insisted that the meeting took place for "protocol reasons," adding that President Hu met with all visiting Heads of State that traveled to China for the Opening Ceremony. Ahmadinejad did not meet with other PRC officials during the visit. His other activities included meetings with athletes and Iranians residing in Beijing.

Ahmadinejad-Hu Bilat: "Good Relations" Reaffirmed

¶4. (C) According to Xu, who served as interpreter for Hu and Ahmadinejad during their bilateral meeting, the two leaders exchanged views on bilateral issues, primarily energy cooperation, and the Iranian nuclear issue. The leaders both noted that China and Iran currently enjoy "good relations," Xu reported, and agreed there is "good potential for further cooperation." President Hu specifically expressed China's willingness to deepen energy cooperation with Iran.

Nuclear Issue: China Urges Iranian "Flexibility"

¶5. (C) President Hu raised the issue of the Iranian nuclear

program with President Ahmadinejad, Xu said, emphasizing the need to uphold the international nuclear nonproliferation regime. Hu stressed the need for a peaceful, negotiated solution to the nuclear issue. Hu added that the present situation constitutes a "good chance" to make progress on the issue and urged the Iranians to show flexibility to push forward with negotiations, Xu reported.

Iran: Seeking "Common Ground" on Competing Proposals

¶16. (C) In the meeting with President Hu, according to Xu, Ahmadinejad said that there are currently two proposals on the table: one from the P5-plus-1 and one from Iran. Ahmadinejad expressed hope that both sides would seek "common ground" between the two proposals, and noted Iran's willingness to continue negotiations on the basis of this common ground. Ahmadinejad also expressed interest in continuing to "negotiate with China" on the nuclear issue.

Ahmadinejad Asks China to "Pass" Iran's Views to P5-plus-1

¶17. (C) Ahmadinejad expressed appreciation for China's "constructive" role in the P5-plus-1 negotiations over the nuclear issue. While stressing that Ahmadinejad did not directly seek Chinese support for Iran's position in the P5-plus-1 process, Xu said that Ahmadinejad expressed hope that China would "pass Iran's views" on the nuclear issue to the rest of the P5-plus-1.

¶18. (C) Asked if he expected visits by high-level Chinese

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officials to Iran in the near future, Xu reported that none are currently scheduled.

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